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EFFECTS OF ORAL INSTRUCTION ON SENIOR SECONDARY ONE STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN SPOKEN ENGLISH IN JOS NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The inability of the Secondary School Students to speak English language convincingly and with confidence in social and formal interactions necessitated this study. The study investigated the effects of Oral Instruction on SSI Students' Achievement in Spoken English in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. The specific objective of the study was to determine the pre-test posttest mean score achievements of the experimental and the control groups in English Vowels and Consonants production/articulation. The quasi-experimental research design was used for the study. The findings of the study revealed that instruction in oral English significantly improved the spoken English achievement of the experimental group. It, implies that the teaching of oral English should be given the much needed attention and prioritized by teachers of English.

Key words: Oral Instruction, Vowels, Consonants and Spoken English.

Background to the Study

Language is a linguistics channel through which cultural, social, political and religious values are passed from generations to generations. Importantly, language has a most distinctive trait in human life. It is this trait that conspicuously makes human unique from other animals. It is inescapably obvious that language is an oral phenomenon, as human beings all communicate in countless ways in oral form and we use almost all our senses such as of touch, of taste, of smell, sight, as well as of hearing for communication yet, in a deep sense of language, spoken language is paramount because it serves as a bedrock for other language skills to be developed. Anjum, Kayani and Jumani, (2019), stated that "Language is considered a tool for communication, and speaking skill is generally known to be the most important of all the four language skills. It is an admitted fact that most of language activities are done orally, and for most people, the ability to speak is

synonymous with knowing the language. Speaking language is often been viewed as the most demanding of the four skills”.

English language has conspicuously assumed the status of global medium of communication by the virtue of its linguistic prominence world over. In Nigeria, English language is the official channel for communication in schools and work places. It is a pedagogical tool teachers use to impart knowledge to learners. English Language has become a necessity in peoples' lives in our contemporary world and that advanced English proficiency has potentially determined the educational and economic life chances of many people across the world and will predictably remain prominent throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century and centuries to come (Nget, Pansari & Poohongthong, 2020). One's ability to speak English Language fluently in Nigeria is synonymous with being educated irrespective of his/ her level of educational attainment. One is considered illiterate in Nigeria once he/ she cannot speak English. In many instances, peoples who are well skilled in spoken language most especially English are accorded some high levels of respect in the society.

Spoken language is a critical component of any language. Oral/ spoken language plays an important role in communication as it is the foundation on which other aspects of language depend on for effective communication. According to Esiyi (2010, p.26), “to speak correctly in English language without affecting precision and without self-consciousness is not only form of good manner, but is also considered a wonderful asset to any Nigerian who acquires the skill”. This implies that, in the consideration of the pride of place which English has occupied in a multilingual Nigeria, it becomes imperative that every Nigerian should be intelligible in English language especially the spoken aspect of the language.

Teaching of oral English in schools helps the students to correctly articulate the sounds of English which in turn avail them the opportunities to speak English with confidence. Teaching sounds of English language helps the learners to be able to speak English fluently in order to carry out most of their day to day activities. Evidence exists linking oral language to the word recognition aspects of reading and/ or the comprehension aspects of the reading model.

The summary of the West African Examination Council and National Examination Council's results for 2015 revealed that only 20% and 21% of students passed English at credit level in both West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO) respectively in Plateau State. (Source: 2015 WAEC 2015 AND NECO 2015 External Examiners' reports).

There are evidences that, Oral English is poorly taught in Secondary Schools

in Nigeria. The inability of most secondary school students in Nigeria to speak or communicate in English language convincingly and effectively in discourse and even social interactions is an indication of poor instruction in Oral English Oyetunde (2003). As such the researcher became interested in investigating the effects of oral instruction on SSSI Students' achievements in Spoken English in Jos North Local Government of Plateau State, Nigeria.

### Statement of The Problem

Secondary School Students in Nigeria have been observed to be deficient in oral English which is evident in their day to day communications. It is obvious that learners of English as second language are mostly faced with the problem of oral proficiency in terms of appropriate production or articulation of English sounds.

It has been observed that spoken English is not receiving any systematic teaching or learning in Nigerian Schools and its teaching or learning is haphazardly done and teachers of English are always under extreme pressure to prepare students for entrance examinations which often results in them focusing on vocabulary and grammar drill at the expense of spoken English. Furthermore, the oral English syllabus is not given much needed attention in terms of its implementation as the teachers focused mainly on preparing the learners/ students for external examination such as West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO) rather than getting them to use the language. The students are only taught how to identify the English sounds without necessarily knowing how to produce those sounds.

The inability of public secondary schools students in Plateau State to learn oral English and speak effectively leads to the low achievement in English language. Poor performance of most job seekers in Nigeria during oral interviews is evidence that many school leavers and graduates are poor in oral or spoken English. Since instruction is very key to the attainment of any educational success, it therefore, the researcher became motivated to investigate into the effects of oral instruction on SSI students' spoken English achievement in Jos North Local Government Area in Plateau State.

### Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study was to investigate the effects of Oral Instruction on SSI Students' Achievement in Spoken English in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. ascertain the pre-test and post-test mean scores achievement of the experimental group and the control group in production of vowel sounds.

2. Determine the pre-test and post-test mean scores achievement of the experimental group and the control group in the production of consonant sounds.

#### Research Questions

The following questions were posed to guide the conduct of the study:

1. To what extent does instruction in vowel sounds help SS I students improve their articulation of English vowels?
2. To what extent does instruction in consonant sounds help SS1 students improve their oral production of English consonants?

#### Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the conduct of the study:

1. *There is no significant difference between the pre-test posttest mean achievement scores of the experimental group and the control group in vowel sound production.*
2. *There is no significant difference between the pre-test posttest mean scores achievement of the experimental group and the control group in consonant sound production.*

#### Theoretical Framework

The research work hinged on the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) theory by Hymes (1974). According to Hymes communication is the primary aim of language teaching. The Proponents of Communicative Language Teaching (Wilkins, Hymes, Halliday among others) state that CLT is traced to the British language teaching tradition dating back to the 1960s. They saw the need to focus language teaching on communicative proficiency rather than on mere mastery of structures. The CLT is best understood as an approach not method. CLT is seen as a unified and broad based theoretical position about the nature of language teaching and learning. It lays credence to the importance of the productive and receptive processing in communication between two speakers in actual usage of language in interpersonal or social context.

A number of researches have shown that proficiency in speaking is attained through direct instruction in speaking skills Salam, (2004). Communicative language teaching entails that, learners are fully involved in casual conversation, express facts, give instruction, describe, report on, and provide narration about current, past, and future events Higgs and Clifford, (2000). The communicative

language teaching emphasizes on the effectiveness of communication rather than the grammatical properties of the language. Some of the properties or features as given by Brown (2000) are:

- Σ Language is a system for the expression of meaning between the speaker and the listener.
- Σ It emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language.
- Σ It stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes. That is, a person who acquires communicative competence acquires both knowledge and ability for language use.
- Σ Instructional emphasis is on communicative proficiency rather than on mere mastery of structures.
- Σ The focus of all learning and speaking activities is on the interchange of a message that the acquirer understands and wishes to transmit, that is, meaningful communication.

Therefore, the theory has learning implications which are relevant to this research since it is aimed at exposing learners to some instructional mechanisms in order to help them acquire the necessary speaking skills. The clear link between the theory and this study is that, the primary goal of language learning is to develop in learners' the ability to communicate effectively which is what this study hopes to achieve.

### Research Design

The design employed for the study was the pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design that involved two groups of students. That is, the experimental group and the control group. The equivalent time-sample which is called the parallel design was employed to randomly assign the subjects to either experimental or control group. The two groups which were drawn from the same population were assigned on the basis of randomization.

At the beginning of the study, the researcher administered the pre-test to both the control and experimental groups on sounds production. After the pre-test, the experimental group was exposed to treatment which involved the communicative language approach and oral drill strategy of instruction in oral English to train the experimental group whereas the control group was left to continue receiving their normal English lessons. After the researcher had concluded the training schedule of programme with the experimental group, the two groups were given a post-test on the production of same sounds.



## Population

The population for the study consists of all one hundred and seventy six (176) Senior Secondary Schools in the Local Government as at the period of the study which are made up of public and private schools. (Source: Education Directorate office, Jos North Local Government Area (2016).All the Senior Secondary One(SS1) Students in the Senior Secondary Schools within the study area formed the population.

## Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample for this study consisted of only two Senior Secondary Schools out of the total school population. One class was selected from each school with twenty five (25) students each. The sample consisted of boys and girls who fall within the ages of thirteen (13) and sixteen (16).. The boys and girls came from mostly low economic background with different linguistic and socio-cultural background whose parents are mostly petty traders and low income earners.

The two selected schools are all located in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State. The Schools and classes as well as the number of the students were selected using the simple random sampling technique. The lottery method was used to select both the schools and the classes. The names of the schools within the target population were written in pieces of papers which were folded and mixed thoroughly before being picked.

## Instrument for Data Collection

The data collected for this study was by means of Test of Oral English Sounds (TOES). The test was an achievement test which was aimed at measuring students' achievement in oral English. An achievement test is basically to measure the extent to which students have achieved something, acquired certain information, or mastered certain skills usually as a result of planned instruction or training. Nwoke and Okoyeukwu (2009) hold that achievement test is designed to effectively measure the amount of knowledge and/ or skills a person has acquired after being exposed to classroom instruction. For this study, the test of oral English sounds (TOES) was formulated by the researcher to measure the students' level of sounds production/ articulation at the pre-test and posttest stages of the study and to ascertain the effects of oral instruction on their spoken English.

## Description of the Instrument

The Test of Oral English Sounds (TOES) is an achievement test which was designed to assess the students' production skills in sounds. The test items reflected the English / syllabus curriculum for SSI. The Test of Oral English

Sounds (TOES) was formulated based on the WAEC Senior Secondary School Syllabus and materials sourced from literature. The researcher decided to extract the sounds from an English text book (Intensive English) where sounds of English were presented to be taught before reading comprehension. The pre-test and post-test were structured to measure the students' ability to produce English vowel and consonant sounds.

#### Validity and Reliability of Instrument

The researcher used the words/ sounds which are often used by the students in their day to day communication in school and even outside school. The test questions were given to the researcher's Supervisor, one Lecturer from Test and Measurement and one Lecturer from English Education all in the University of Jos to ensure that the instrument really serve the purpose it was intended. The experts were involved in order to determine whether the instrument to be used was relevant to the content of the SS1 Oral English curriculum from the items were drawn. Test-retest method of reliability testing was used to ascertain the appropriateness and consistency of instrument.

#### Procedure for Data Collection

##### Training of Research Assistants

Two (2) research assistants were trained and used to assist the researcher in the study. The researchers were selected teachers with either B.A ED or B.ED or B.A in English language degrees.

##### Administration of Pre-Test

The test of Oral English Sounds (TOES) was administered to both the experimental and control groups. The pre-test was administered to all the fifty (50) students during the first week of the programme. The session of the administration lasted for two hours thirty minutes for the two groups. The reason for the pre-test was to ascertain the speaking skills that the students possessed before the treatment.

##### Administration of Treatment.

After the pre-test, the experimental group was exposed to the instruction in Oral English for the period of six (6) weeks. The instruction in Oral English was carried out during the long vacation in order to have ample time for the treatment. This is so, because the schools time-table allocated only 45 minutes per lesson and three times a week. The two schools ran extra-moral lesson which availed the researcher the opportunity to carry out the instruction using the experimental group.

### Administration of Post-test

Just as it was during the pre-test, the Test of Oral English Sounds (TOES) was administered to both the experimental and control groups. During the administration of the section B of the test which had to with sounds production/ pronunciation, the students were asked to remain in the class while they were invited individually to participate in the test under close supervision of the researcher and the research assistants.

### Method of control of Extraneous Variables

The researcher used both consistent environment and randomization methods to control the effects of the extraneous variables on both the dependent and independent variable. To achieve this, the researcher ensured that the control and the experimental groups were given the same environmental condition in order to minimize the effect of experimental bias and problem of participant variables.

### Method of Data Analysis

The statistical tool the researcher used for analysing the data collected from the subjects was t-test of independent sample to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the t-test was computed to ascertain the correlation between the experimental group and control group. The t-test statistical tool was selected because of its stability in comparing the mean scores of two independent groups (experimental and control groups) to ascertain the mean difference between the two groups as well as to determine the effectiveness of the treatment on the experimental group.

### Results

Research Question 1: To what extent does oral instruction in vowel sounds help students improve their articulation of English sounds?

TABLE 1. Pre-test posttest mean scores in English Vowels Production

Group	Test	N	Mean	Variance	Std.	t-l	t.crit	df	Decision
Experimental	Pre-test	25	9.24	34.3	4.6				Null Hypothesis rejected
	Posttest	25	23.2	20.8	5.9	10.9	2.0	48	
Control	Pre-test	25	10.9	14.4	3.8				
	Posttest	25	10.6	12.9	3.6				

The result shows that, the mean score of the experimental group is 23.2 while that of the control group is 10.6 as against the achievements of the two groups in the pre-test where the control group performed slightly above the experimental group. Their mean scores in the pre-test are 10.9 and 9.24 for the experimental and control groups. The improvement in the achievement of the experimental group is a result of their exposure to instruction in oral English which lasted for six weeks

Research Question 2: To what extent does oral instruction in consonant sounds help students improve their articulation of English sounds?

Table 2 Pre-test posttest mean scores in English consonants Production

Group	Test	N	Mean	Variance	Std.	t-l	t.crit	df	Decision
Experimental	Pretest	25	8.6	52.5	7.2				Null hypothesis rejected
	Posttest	25	23.8	38.9	6.2	7.5	2.0	48	
Control	Pre-test	25	9.2	45.6	7.4				
	Posttest	25	9.6	54.2	6.8				

As seen in the table above, the result indicates that the mean achievement score of the experimental group in the posttest is higher than that of the control group. The mean score of the experimental group is 23.8 while that of the control group is 9.6 as against the achievements of the two groups in the pre-test where the control group performed slightly above the control group. Their mean scores in the pre-test are 9.2 and 8.6. The improvement in the achievement of the experimental group is a result of their exposure to instruction in oral English which lasted for six weeks.

### Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students in the experimental group and those in the control group in vowel sound production

Table 3: t-test analysis of the experimental and the Control mean scores in English Vowel articulation

Group	Test	N	Mean	Variance	Std.	t-al	t.crit	Df	Decision
experimental	Pretest	25	9.24	34.3	4.6				Null Hypothesis rejected
	Posttest	25	23.2	20.8	5.9				
						10.9	2.0	48	
Control	Pre-test	25	10.9	14.4	3.8				
	Posttest	25	10.6	12.9	3.6				

Critical region:  $\alpha = 0.05$ , two-tailed test,  $df = 48$

Decision: Since our t-calculated (10.9) is greater than the t-critical (2.0), we reject the null hypothesis

Conclusion: The t.test calculation indicates that:  $t_{cal} = 10.9$ ,  $t_{critical}$ ,  $df = 48$  and two-tailed  $\alpha = 0.05$ . This means that there is a significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students in the experimental group and those in the control group in English vowel production. By this, since the  $t_{cal}$  (10.9) is greater than the table value (2.0). The null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis : There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students in the experimental group and those in the control group in consonant sound production.

Level of significance:

Group	Test	N	Mean	Variance	Std.	t-al	t.crit	df	Decision
Experimental	Pretest	25	8.6	52.5	7.2				Null Hypothesis rejected
	Posttest	25	23.8	38.9	6.2				
						7.5	2.0	48	
Control	Pre-test	25	9.2	45.6	7.4				
	Posttest	25	9.6	54.2	6.8				

Determine the critical region:  $\alpha = 0.05$ , two-tailed test,  $df = 48$

Decision: Since our t-calculated (7.4) is less than the t-critical (2.0), we reject the null hypothesis.

Conclusion: The t-test calculation indicates that:  $t_{cal} = 7.4$ ,  $t_{critical} = 2.0$ ,  $df = 48$  and two-tailed  $\alpha = 0.05$ . This means that there is a significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students in the experimental group and those in the control group in English consonant production. Since the  $t_{cal} (7.4)$  is greater than the table value (2.0). The null hypothesis is rejected.

### Discussion of Findings

The results show that the control group has the mean scores of 10.9 (vowel production) and 9.2 (consonant production) in the pretest whereas the experimental has the mean scores of 9.24 (vowel sounds production) and 8.6 (consonant sounds production) in the pretest. This means that the control group has the overall mean scores of 20.1% while the experimental group has the overall mean score of 9.24%

The findings also show that the experimental group performed better than the control group in all vowels and consonants in the posttest with the mean scores of 23.2 (vowel sounds production) and 23.8 (consonant sounds production). The control group has the mean scores of 10.6 (vowel production) and 9.6 (consonant

production). This means that the control group has the overall mean scores of 23.92% while the experimental group has the overall mean score of 47%

The findings are therefore consistent with the findings of related studies (Odo, 2005; Wenli, 2005; Gavin & Wilson, 2014; Ononiwu & Queen, 2005; Wuju, 2012). In their separate findings they submitted that instruction in oral English has great impact on the learning of English as a second language.

The results of this study are also in agreement with earlier research findings on the effects of instruction on English language as a second language in general. Studies conducted by Ugwuoke (2006), Okonkwo (1996), Cohen (2001), Saricoban and Metin (2000). Maley and Duff (2001) found that instruction has positive effect on students' achievement in English language. Again, in support of the findings of this researcher, Cohen (2001) and Utoh (1996) provided widely cited results on effects of game instruction on students' achievement in English language. They found out in their studies that students taught with game techniques performed better in standardized tests than students taught with conventional technique.

### Summary of the Findings

After analyzing the data collected from the respondents (both the experimental and the control group), the following findings emerged:

- ∑ The performance of the Students from the experimental group who were exposed to the instruction in Oral English was significantly higher than that of the control group. Their results show that the pre-test and the Posttest mean scores of the experimental group were 9.24 and 47 while the pre-test and Posttest mean scores of the control group were 20.1 and 23.92.
- ∑ The results indicate that the instruction in oral English has help to improve the performance of the students in English words pronunciation, vowel production and consonant production.

### Conclusion

The findings of the study showed that instruction in oral English improved the students' achievement significantly in spoken English. This is because there was a significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students in the experimental group and control group at the three levels of oral English tested. The researchers concluded that the significant improvement in the achievement of the experimental group was due to their exposure to the treatment administered to them.

### Recommendations

Based on the summary of the findings, the following recommendations are

made:

1. In an oral English class, the teaching of listening and sound production should be given priority before sound production.
2. The learners should always be given the opportunity to engage in real speaking activities to build their confidence in spoken English.

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